

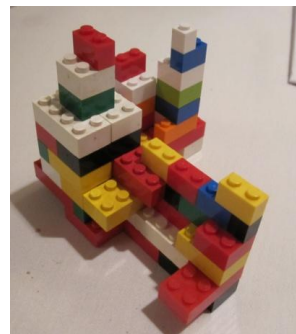
Child Advocacy Centres Knowledge Exchange, Ottawa  
Tuesday afternoon, March 1, 2011

**Panel # 6: *Partnerships and Collaborations among Agencies Working to Support Child Victims and Witnesses***

[Cindy Paskey](#), Executive Director, Child Advocacy Centre Niagara, St. Catharines, ON

[Karyn Kennedy](#), Executive Director, BOOST Child Abuse Prevention & Intervention, Toronto, ON

*See Presentation:* [\[Kennedy\] Toronto – BOOST – Partnerships & collaborations](#)



*All delegates received a small package of Lego blocks. By the end of each day, and without any directions, delegates at every table pooled their blocks to assemble unique designs. Every table's structure used the same ingredients – but ended up looking completely different. Building a CAC to meet the unique needs of each community was also the key take-away message of the whole Knowledge Exchange.*

[Cindy Paskey](#) described the Child Advocacy Centre Niagara as a regional facility located in St. Catharines, Ontario. It exists because of devoted volunteers who truly believed in the concept. The centre began development in 1999 with a steering committee, with membership that included: experience in sexual assault, public health, victims services, medical professionals, regional police, children's aid societies and family counselling. Their champion was a police chief (now retired) who headed the steering committee and recruited volunteers. They secured letters of commitment from key senior officials, began developing joint protocols with partners, and collected data to demonstrate why a CAC was needed in their area. They started fundraising only after these partnerships were in place. Nine years later, the CAC opened in 2008.

She reported that they receive no core government funding, but have received some recent project funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the federal Department of Justice, which has allowed them to start new initiatives. The

community supported them financially, despite suffering from the ripple effects of the closing of the GM factory and the general recession. They established a board and contracted for a feasibility study. That report advised that they could collect up to \$ 750,000 from the community (not the \$ 1.5 million they had hoped for). They did raise \$750,000 to purchase and renovate an old church in which to centralize their services.

*“We opened the doors, and then realized we needed money to operate. So... once again, we started fundraising like mad! Community support has been and continues to be phenomenal. People don’t argue against the cause – most people support us.”*

She emphasized the need to educate the general public and raise awareness. One of the surprising things they learned during the fundraising drive is how little most people in the general population know about child abuse. Another on-going challenge that she identified is the duplication of services within their community.

About 15 volunteers work in their CAC, and play an important role in fundraising.

Their next goals are to keep fundraising, enhance services, develop new programs, develop new MOUs, and to achieve accreditation from the National Children’s Alliance.

[Karyn Kennedy](#) of Boost discussed their 20-year-long effort in the Toronto community to establish a CAC. The Mission statement of the partners working toward a CAC was agreed on right from the beginning, and they find it beneficial to re-visit that Mission from time to time. The development of partnerships and collaborations has been an on-going and challenging process, but their goal is now closer than ever.

The key challenge is the huge Toronto metropolitan area, with several police services and 4 separate children’s aid societies (public, Catholic, Jewish and Aboriginal). A needs assessment, done early on, identified obstacles to be addressed. A significant issue was the referral process – children and families were not being referred or the referral came months after the case was identified.

Their experiences over the years have taught them that they *“need to make the relationships before building the building. We need to focus on shared goals, develop trust, and put concerns on the table.”*

They are still seeking a large facility to house the Toronto CAC. Meanwhile, they begin a pilot project in April 2011, using The Gatehouse, a child-friendly environment, where CAC services can begin to be provided. Included in this pilot is the hiring of a person for the advocate position. Research data will be collected from the onset.

## Q& A's

During the question period, it was generally agreed that it may be easier to establish a CAC in a smaller community. In bigger cities, the cost of purchasing a building becomes enormous, and many organizations compete for donations and attention. When asked if it was preferable to acquire a building first, or develop community partnerships first, Kennedy and Paskey replied that their experiences were different, because their communities are different.

In further discussion about funding, the panellists said they received some government funding to support their CAC development and hope for more. It was suggested that a multi-ministry approach to funding would be the best response. Another suggestion was that CAC committee members may want to start a Facebook campaign to support fundraising.

Nick Bala suggested that when developing a CAC, it is important to articulate the economic benefits of developing such a centre, as a CAC will assist with access to justice issues and save money by reducing the use of court services and health services.

Chris Newlin commented that *"sometimes it is good to separate the CAC concept from the money. Try to get support on the concept first, then seek money down the road."* He acknowledged the support of the Canadian Department of Justice in the development of CACs, and added that other levels of government need to be brought in.

Tracy Hannah pointed out that anyone attempting to develop a CAC should try to get commitment from the CACP (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police), a very influential group, who may be able to assist with some of the problems that many delegates cite in getting quicker referrals and more overall cooperation from local police. This comment provoked more discussion about the need to get the RCMP on-side. While they have been helpful to CACs in some regions, better collaborations are needed from them in other places.

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For a summary of the discussion on these topics at the Round Tables, see:

*Round Table Summary 6 – Partnerships and Collaborations among Agencies  
Working to Support Child Victims and Witnesses*